

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 1335

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, KS, CB

SUBJECT: ROK REACTION TO CAMBODIAN SITUATION

1. ROK PRESS AND POLITICAL FIGURES HAVE COMMENTED ON
SERIOUSNESS OF DEVELOPMENTS IN CAMBODIA AND SIGNIFICANCE
OF USG RESPONSE TO SITUATION THERE.

2. EDITORIALS HAVE POINTED OUT GRAVITY OF GKR PLIGHT,
INCLUDING WARNINGS BY USG OFFICIALS THAT GKR CANNOT
SURVIVE WITHOUT ADEQUATE AND TIMELY US ASSISTANCE AND HAVE SAID
USG INABILITY TO PROVIDE THAT ASSISTANCE WOULD
HAVE SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS IN REST OF ASIA.

3. TONGA ILBO FEBRUARY 26 SAID USG SHOULD PROVIDE
IMMEDIATE SUPPORT TO KHMER IN ORDER TO PREVENT FALL OF LON NOL
REGIME AND TO HASTEN NEGOTIATIONS WITH HANOI, USSR AND PRC.
PAPER SAID "IF USG BRINGS CATASTROPHE BY TAKING NEGATIVE
ATTITUDE, IT WILL ENCOURAGE COMMUNISTS IN ASAI AND GENERATE
PSYCHOLOGICAL UNEASINESS AND DISTRUST FROM ASIAN ALLIES." SEMI-
OFFICIAL KYONGHYANG SHINMUM WROTE FEBRUARY 27 THAT
"US MUST NEGOTIATE WITH SIHANOUK AND KHMER COMMUNISTS, WHO ARE
WATCHING USG ATTITUDE TOWARD KHMER", AND ADDED THAT "WE HOPE THAT
USG WILL TRY TO MAINTAIN INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND WIN FURTHER
CONFIDENCE FROM ITS ALLIES BY PROVIDING IMMEDIATE SUPPORT TO
KHMER". GOVT ENGLISH-LANGUAGE KOREA HERALD FEB 28 STATES
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EDITORIALLY THAT COMMUNISTS ARE EMBOLDENED BY LACK OF MAJOR

SUPPORT FOR GKR. WRITING THAT PRESENT AIRLIFT CAN PROVIDE LITTLE MORE THAN MINIMUM STOPGAR AID TO MEET PRESSING BASIC NEED, HERALD URGES CONGRESS TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO PHNOM PENH. IF USG INSTEAD CHOOSES TO LEAVE "THAT STRUGGLING FRIEND" TO MERCY OF EVENTS, IT WOULD BE "ALARMING SETBACK TO THE CONFIDENCE OF US ALLIES IN THE US COMMITMENT TO A COLLECTIVE STABILITY AND SECURITY".

4. COMMENT: KOREANS CLEARLY VIEW CAMBODIAN SITUATION AS MAJOR TEST OF US FAITH AND ABILITY TO CARRY OUT COMMITMENTS. IN CONVERSATIONS WITH AMBASSADOR, NUMBER OF HIGH RANKING ROKG OFFICIALS HAVE SAID THAT US ACTIONS IN CAMBODIA WILL BE INDICATION OF EXTENT TO WHICH US WILL HONOR COMMITMENTS ELSEWHERE. ONE OFFICIAL CITED PERSONAL CONCERN OF PRESIDENT PARK TO THIS EFFECT.

5. OPPOSITION NDP SECRETARY GENERAL ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT FAILURE OF US TO SUPPORT CAMBODIA WOULD BE SEEN AS SIGN OF REDUCED US COMMITMENT TO ASIAN ALLIES.
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